

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez (CA-47), the ranking female member on the House Armed Services Committee, today voted to repeal the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy that prevents gays and lesbians from serving openly in the Armed Forces. H.R. 2965, which was introduced Tuesday by House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-Md.) and Rep. Patrick Murphy (D-Pa.), is broadly supported by our troops and military leaders, including Defense Secretary Robert Gates and Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

"Repealing 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' is the right thing to do," said Rep. Sanchez. "Everyone who is willing and able to serve their country should be able to do so, regardless of sexual orientation. This is an issue of national security as well as fairness that affects every single American."

H.R. 2965 would repeal "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" only after: 1) receipt of a Department of Defense study on the impact of a repeal and 2) a certification by the Secretary of Defense, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, and the President that repeal is first, consistent with military readiness, military effectiveness, unit cohesion, and recruiting; and second, that the DOD has prepared the necessary policies and regulations to implement repeal. Defense Secretary Gates has emphasized it is critical that Congress pass this legislation, empowering the Defense Department to implement repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" itself, rather than have repeal imposed by the courts.

In Congress, Rep. Sanchez has been a longtime opponent of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." During a House Armed Services Committee hearing with senior Pentagon officials earlier this year, she said the U.S. should follow the lead of at least twenty other countries that allow gays and lesbians to serve openly. Rep. Sanchez has pledged to work with our military leaders to implement a policy repeal as quickly and seamlessly as possible.